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SUBJECT	Frank Snepp		

HARRY REASONER: Frank Snepp is one of several former CIA officers who have recently published books about their experiences in the agency. Today Snepp went on trial in Alexandria, Virginia, in a civil action charging him with violating his contract with the CIA by publishing his book.

Tim O'Brien reports.

TIM O'BRIEN: The book is critical of the way U.S. officials handled the evacuation of Saigon but it does not contain any classified information. The problem is it was not cleared by CIA higherups, as Frank Snepp had promised in writing when he joined the agency in 1968.

Today Snepp argues his book involves a matter of great public concern, and that contract he signed was so broad it violated his free speech rights.

FRANK SNEPP: I think there's a question at issue here, whether a CIA officer, or former officer, can responsibly criticize the agency and not suffer any retribution for it.

O'BRIEN: Inside, Snepp's attorney, Mark Lynch was repeatedly interrupted by Judge Oren Lewis who at times crossexamined Lynch as a prosecutor might a witness.

Judge Lewis also discharged the jury, saying he would decide the case for himself, which is his prerogative when, as here, the facts are not in dispute.